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From Mass Migrations to Sustainable Development - Re-thinking the EU-Africa Partnership as a Win-Win Co-Development Strategy

Jean-Marc Trouille

Jean Monnet Chair in European Economic Integration

Faculty of Management & Law

University of Bradford, UK

Email: j.m.l.trouille@bradford.ac.uk

Abstract – This contribution focuses on two fundamental features of the African continent that will affect both sides of the Mediterranean in the 21st Century. On the one hand, the huge migration potential of Africa. On the other, the speed of economic change of a continent increasingly regarded as ‘the next China’. The challenge facing both the European Union and Africa is to ensure that African growth and demography will be sustainable. The paper argues that Europe will be the part of the world the most directly affected by developments in Africa, be they the worst random shocks or the most virtuous economic trends. It therefore calls for an ambitious renewed EU-Africa economic partnership, similar in scope to the Chinese cooperation model in Africa but without imitating it, to avoid a migratory haemorrhage and make African development sustainable to the benefit of both sides of the Mediterranean.

In the tormented landscape of Europe’s South-Eastern neighbourhood, punctuated by wars and terrorism, not all recent evolutions are negative. At a time when the European Union (EU) is struggling with the issue of migrants escaping devastation in the Middle-East, certain positive developments are taking place beyond the Mediterranean. Once dubbed ‘the forgotten continent’, Africa is no longer exclusively associated with endemic poverty, ill governance, conflict, food insecurity and epidemics. Its resources in raw materials and rare earth minerals have attracted attention of the US, the BRICS, and other non-Western countries such as Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Turkey, giving African countries a choice of new partners. African economic expansion is far less dependent upon the export of raw materials than it used to be. With many of its economies expanding at a pace above the global average, the African continent is now becoming an area of economic growth and urbanisation, offering new opportunities for business, and investment. Cross-border trade is beginning to grow, and years of institution building are at last paying off in terms of strengthening domestic, regional and sub-regional organisations. More than half of foreign direct investments (FDI) are now geared towards service industries such as telecommunications. Manufacturing industries such as textiles also develop rapidly thanks for an abundant workforce leaving the countryside to the large metropolises. Finally, Africa has a rising middle class which will boost internal

consumption. Such trends potentially bear hopes for a renewed North-South cooperation across the Mediterranean.

Africa: A giant in the making

Africa is indeed a key emerging continent. High growth rates among many African economies over the last fifteen years have led to the widespread belief that Africa, traditionally the world's poorest continent, will become 'the China of the 21st Century', 'the next Eldorado', which could one day become the world's new growth engine (Lamy 2013; Baverez 2015). Notwithstanding this, African economies are facing numerous challenges. In particular, they need to improve their competitiveness; to produce more goods with higher added value; to replace fragmented national markets by a wider continental single market; and finally, to create on average 29 million jobs each year until at least 2030 in order to integrate all young entrants on the job market. These challenges are not only a concern for African countries, but they also impact upon Europe, at a time when EU-Africa relations are in a state of change. How to contribute most effectively to African economic expansion and poverty eradication? How to deal with the huge scale of Africa's migration potential? Does the existing Africa-EU Strategic Partnership offer the right framework to reach such ambitious aims? These issues are all closely related and cannot be disentangled. In this context, characterised by an above average pace of economic expansion, which is itself combined with a booming African population and the potential for a rising flux of migrants looking towards Europe, three, at first glance unrelated, events took place between June and December 2015. These three events call for an urgent re-think of the economic, commercial and cultural relationship that the EU entertains with the African continent.

Regional economic integration and pan-African economic convergence

The first concerns the signing, in June 2015 in Charm-el Cheikh, of a Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA), which will bring closer together three of the eight regional economic communities of Africa: the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The 21st Century will be dominated by large structures in which states will organise themselves at the level of regions and continents and build their foundations on the model of Europe. This is what is now taking place in Africa both at regional and at continental level (Onyango and Trouille 2015b).

Stretching from Alexandria to the Cape of Good Hope, this free trade agreement between its 26 member states will represent a population larger than NAFTA or the EU. The TFTA could lead towards a pan-African single market, potentially the largest of its kind in the world, both in terms of size and population (Onyango and Trouille 2015c). In a not too distant future, the TFTA might even be the largest market in terms of combined GDP: with 5.4 percent yearly non-oil growth on average in sub-Saharan Africa since the turn of the Millennium¹, both international business and

¹ IMF figures.

young African entrepreneurs anticipate rapid further expansion at a time when Europe appears to have geared itself to sluggish growth and Asia is struggling to keep its momentum. Among the ten countries with the highest level of economic growth in 2015, five were African economies. Ethiopia, for instance, is ranked by the IMF among the five currently most dynamic economies in the world. Out of the six new emerging economies (BENIVM²) representing together nearly one billion people, two are African countries: Nigeria, and Ethiopia, which aims to become the new workshop of the world (Daziano 2013). But this trend needs further consolidation to become a feature of the new Africa. Reducing border controls and red tape and improving infrastructures across the continent have become urging necessities in order for Africans to reap more benefits from intra-African trade, which still amounts to less than 12 percent of overall African trade with the world, compared with respectively 70 percent of intra-EU and 55 percent of intra-Asian trades³.

Not only has trade been hugely affected by borders, but also the development of African industries, which have been deprived of wider market access, and also, as a result, of major investment flows. Hence, there is a growing number of local African businesses calling for more forceful policy action and improved trade facilitation measures to implement the free circulation of the four freedoms. Progress has been made at the level of various regional economic communities, however there is often a discrepancy between declared good intentions and effective policy implementation (Onyango and Trouille 2015a). These stakes are so crucial for African development and entrepreneurship that, as early as 1991, the Abuja Treaty aimed to lift internal trade barriers by 2025. Whether the TFTA initiative, which speeds up the process by a decade, will really be the ground-breaking leap forward that it ambitions to be, remains of course to be seen, as this will largely depend on political will, vision, and implementation at various national levels. But the direction that has been taken collectively looks encouraging.

Migrations: an African as much as a European problem

The second development was the Summit meeting of the EU and the African Union (AU) on migrations, held in November 2015 in Malta. The Valletta Summit was launched on the initiative of France and Germany after a shipwreck disaster took the lives of hundreds of migrants on Libyan shores. The goal was to respond to the rapidly growing numbers of migrants by tackling the roots of mass African migration to the North and contributing to economic development and job creation in the South. Beyond saving lives and controlling migrant flows, the aim was also to address concerns among many African countries that their economic ties with Europe could suffer collateral damage from the Syrian debacle. Arguably, the summit took place in a climate of improvisation, as Europeans' prime preoccupations were caused by increasing flows of migrants from the Middle-East. In this context, it is questionable whether the fund of €1.8m offered by the EU is sufficient to create the desired economic framework for African migrants to stay in their countries of origin.

² Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Indonesia, Vietnam and Mexico.

³ Africa Report, UNCTAD, 2013.

The EU-AU Summit in Valletta is, admittedly, only one of many European initiatives to support financially African development. After the 2000 Cotonou Agreement with Caribbean, African and Pacific (ACP) Countries, a joint Africa-EU Strategic Partnership⁴ was launched in 2007 by 80 European and African Heads of State to develop close cooperation, overcome a long-standing donor-recipient relationship and provide a framework for joint action in key areas. This large-scale collaborative agreement is a useful framework with an ambitious mission statement, which aims at promoting political cooperation, peace, security, democracy and human rights, as well as trade, regional integration, economic cooperation and sustainable development. However, with €1.6bn provided by the EU Commission to the AU since 2003 and a similar amount provided to the African Peace Facility since 2004, support remains modest in view of the ambitions displayed in the statement.

This leads us to the third significant event that took place last year in Africa. At the latest China-Africa Summit, which took place on 4 December 2015 in Johannesburg, Chinese President Xi Jinping offered \$60bn (€55.3bn) of assistance, loans, credits and investments in infrastructure projects, over thirty times more than the fund offered by the EU two weeks earlier in Valletta. Admittedly, the EU fund must be considered in addition to substantial development assistance, an area where the EU is the most generous provider in the world. Europe is also a major provider of foreign direct investments (FDI) to African economies and Africa's first trade partner. Furthermore, European sources of funding are multi-faceted as they emanate both from the EU and from member states. But notwithstanding this, the size of the Chinese package ought to be a wake-up call. It reflects a far-reaching, forward-looking geopolitical ambition on the part of China (Michel, S. and Beuret, M. 2010) which is in sharp contrast with a certain lack of strategic vision in Europe to address current evolutions on its neighbouring continent.

The Valletta Summit led nonetheless to positive outcomes, even though limited ones. It reassured the 23 African states represented at the meeting that Europe was still open for trade and business; that closer cooperation with Europe will contribute to retaining skilled, innovative and entrepreneurial young people in Africa; and that African business people and students visiting the EU will continue to obtain visas. Furthermore, this summit could, and should, prefigure more ambitious North-South cooperation across the Mediterranean. Africa also faces migration problems on a similar scale experienced by Europe. Economic migrants to South Africa, Angola or Nigeria are just a few examples showing that most African migrations currently take place within Africa (Bilak 2016; Flahaut and De Haas 2016). Another example is Dadaab, in Kenya, the largest refugee camp worldwide, with a population of 350,000, mostly Somalians. Problems of such scale cannot be solved only with EU humanitarian aid but call for effective action to boost economic prospects.

The demographic 'time-bomb': A shared sword of Damocles

Furthermore, the launch of the TFTA and the Malta Summit have to be considered in the light of the most recent demographic evolutions in order to fully appraise the demographic 'time-bomb' potentially threatening both Europe's welfare and Africa's

⁴ http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/documents/eas2007_joint_strategy_en.pdf

economic expansion. To take only one example, Niger, one of the least developed countries on earth, counted 3 million inhabitants when it became independent in 1960. Today, its population has reached 20 million. On the basis of current trends, it will count 36 million by 2030, 72 million by 2050, and 209 million in 2100. But Niger is by no means an isolated case. This rapid demographic evolution is characteristic for the whole continent, whose population will double by 2050 to reach 2.5 billion, until the figure doubles again by 2100. At the same time, the population of the old continent, in geographic terms, will shrink from 738 million today to 707 million in 2050 and 646 million by the end of the Century⁵.

Another striking comparison is provided by the latest report of the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) on ‘Global Trends 2030’⁶, as illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1: Estimated median age of populations per continent in 2030:

Europe	44.7
Northern America	39.5
Asia	35.4
Oceania	34.9
Latin America and Caribbean	34.1
WORLD AVERAGE	33.2
Africa	21.3

In 15 years, Africa will have the lowest (21.3 years) median age in the world whilst Europe will score the highest (44.7 years). Other continents’ figures will stretch between Europe and Africa, and the average age across the world will reach 33.2 years. In other words, Africa’s already young population will become even younger whilst Europe’s ageing population will become even older. Demographic explosion and over-population in the South will contrast with demographic implosion and

⁵ United Nations (2015) World Population Prospects, key findings and advance tables, 2015 Revision: http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/Key_Findings_WPP_2015.pdf

⁶ ESPAS (2015) *Global Trends to 2030: Can the EU meet the Challenges ahead?* European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS), Report: <http://europa.eu/espas/pdf/espas-report-2015.pdf>

relative under-population in the North. In both scenarios, economic growth and prosperity, social security, health and social care, education and lifestyles are likely to be directly affected.

Should it be deducted from these opposite trends that movements of populations will follow the principle of communicating vessels? Is this to say that the recent flux of migrants to Europe and more specifically to Germany is only the tip of the iceberg in comparison to potential mass migrations from South to North in the next decades? The tremendous scale of the African demographic challenge, coupled with the impact on fragile populations of armed conflicts, corrupt regimes and climatic changes, are fundamental threats for European and African stability alike, despite the fact that rapid African economic growth bears at the same time the promise of attractive trade, business and investment opportunities. Indeed, 5 percent yearly growth will not be sufficient to contain Africa's exponential demographic curve. Only with a higher level of sustained growth will Africa be able to reduce substantially the continent's extreme poverty, which increases the risk of Islamic radicalisation.

Fertility rate and education

The more developed an economic area is, the more its demography will adopt certain patterns, in terms of its population's life expectancy and median age, as well as in terms of its fertility rate. However, the most important factor that can speed up demographic transition and achieve smaller family size is the fertility rate per woman in childbearing age. This rate mostly depends upon the level of education of African women. In a most recent World Bank report on demographic trends in Africa (Canning *et al* 2015), it clearly appears that African fertility rates will not be controlled unless decisive progress is made in educating more women. The case of Ethiopia, which counts with 99 million the second largest population of Africa, is significant in this respect (see Table 2). In 1960, Ethiopian women in childbearing age had a fertility rate of 7 children. This rate only dropped to 5 in 2014. This progress was very slow compared to the current 2-3 average in Maghreb countries or Tunisia, which is even below 2. However, as Table 2 indicates, the picture is different when considering female education levels. The greater the number of years spent in full education, the lower the number of children. Ethiopian girls who have attended the full 12 years of primary and secondary education have a lower fertility rate than the national average of France! Clearly this shows that the education of young women impacts substantially upon their contraception. These figures demonstrate the utmost importance of education in the African context.

Table 2: Level of education versus fertility rate in Ethiopia (2014):

Women with no school education	6.0
Women with 8 years of school education	2.5

Women with full 12 years of school education	1.5
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Source: World Bank

Both demographic and economic trends in Africa will need to be addressed jointly by ‘old Europe’ and ‘young Africa’, and at the earliest opportunity, in order to work together in making future development in Africa sustainable. Alongside infrastructure and agriculture, education is one of the three keys of sustainable development, and it is also an area where Europe can make a decisive difference. Almost each of the 54 African states has a European language as official language. This cultural link inherited from colonial times is a great asset for the countries concerned as well as for EU-Africa cultural and economic cooperation.

Making African development sustainable: A strategic imperative for EU-Africa relations

Whilst the large range of EU initiatives and contributions to support Africa go in the right direction, they need to be more substantial and coordinated more effectively. The EU needs to strengthen its strategic ambition and work on a renewed Euro-African partnership for co-development whose priority will be to make African economic development sustainable, to harness the demographic explosion, and to ensure that the new generations will find jobs. Europeans can be certain that they will be directly exposed to all consequences, positive as well as negative, of all evolutions that will affect Africa in future. The choice for them is therefore to decide at this juncture whether they want to shape these major economic, political, social, demographic and climatic upheavals that Africa will increasingly have to face. It is in the utmost interest of the EU to define a clear vision to anticipate, encourage and strengthen African economic expansion to make it more sustainable for the mutual benefit of both continents and their societies.

The oldest and the youngest continents will need to work closer together towards establishing a North-South axis based on the convergence and complementarity of their respective interests. The rise of Africa offers crucial opportunities for Europe as an alternative to the shift of economic power from Western economies to the Asia-Pacific region. Europe will not be able to solve its growth and competitiveness issue, face its ageing population and keep a sustainable welfare without tight economic and political cooperation with booming economies at its doorstep. The EU remains Africa’s largest development aid donor, one of its main trade partners, and its main provider of FDI. But Europe needs to use its position as a key economic player to establish a forward-looking strategic partnership for co-development. It needs to go beyond its traditional role of main development aid donor to contribute more effectively to African prosperity, peace and security and create the conditions for Africa to build sustainable societies.

Last but not least: How to deal with China?

This is a huge task ahead, with multiple obstacles on the way. Whilst Europeans have considered Africa for too long as their natural back garden, the rest of the world has discovered the potentialities brought about by its recent economic rise. China, in particular, has embarked at an early stage into a large-scale economic cooperation with most African states and gained paramount economic importance on the black continent. Since 2009, China has been Africa's main trade partner. The EU has to take stock of this new context. Should these two protagonists behave like economic and geopolitical rivals on the African chessboard (Huliaras 2012)? Or else, should they consider forms of tripartite strategic cooperation that could lead to creating a favourable framework for sustainable development and generate a win-win situation for all three parties concerned? What would be the whys and wherefores of such triangular cooperation? Is there complementarity between the EU's and China's respective comparative advantages? Can these be combined with a view to maximising mutual economic benefit among all stakeholders? Should a 'Euro-Chinese Marshall Plan' be envisaged to boost African economic development and ensure its sustainability? How could such a grand project work with, on the one hand, Europeans with a long experience in dealing with different views and reaching consensual agreements between sometimes very diverging positions, but on the other, African and Asian partners, many of whom have authoritarian regimes less inclined to look beyond their direct interests? From a geopolitical, economic, trade and business perspective, the potential benefits of engaging collectively in such a unique triangular cooperation could generate positive multiplier effects for all, as long as a balance is preserved between boosting trade and investment and promoting development goals (Patey 2014). But African governments may be wary of losing their ability to bargain between the EU and China, whilst Beijing may prefer to preserve its role as an alternative development partner through its distinctive brand of south-south cooperation. The challenge will be to convince Africans and Chinese that a tripartite approach can be more fruitful than separate geopolitical competition on African soil.

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